

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks. Prior to entry of this response, Claims 1-14 and 22-25 were pending in the application, of which Claims 1, 7, 9, 12, and 22 are independent. In the Final Office Action dated November 15, 2005, Claims 9-11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and Claims 1-8, 12-14, and 22-25 were allowed. Following this response, Claims 1-8, 12-14, and 22-25 remain in this application, Claims 9-11 being canceled without prejudice or disclaimer by this amendment. Applicants hereby address the Examiner's rejections in turn.

I. **Rejection of the Claims Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)**

In the Final Office Action dated November 15, 2005, the Examiner rejected Claims 9-11 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,828,376 ("Solimene"). Claims 9-11 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Accordingly, the rejection of Claims 9-11 has been rendered moot.

II. **Allowance of Claims**

Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner pass Claims 1-8, 12-14, and 22-25 to issue.

III. **Conclusion**

Applicants respectfully request that this Amendment After Final be entered by the Examiner, placing the claims in condition for allowance. Applicants respectfully submit

that the proposed amendments of the claims do not raise new issues or necessitate the undertaking of any additional search of the art by the Examiner, since all of the elements and their relationships claimed were either earlier claimed or inherent in the claims as examined. Therefore, this Amendment should allow for immediate action by the Examiner.

Finally, Applicants respectfully submit that the entry of the Amendment would place the application in better form for appeal, should the Examiner dispute the patentability of the pending claims.

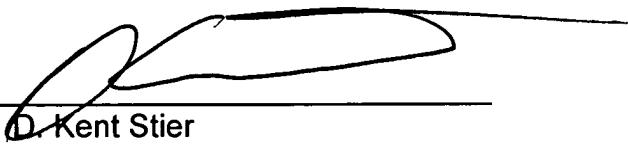
In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that the claimed invention, as amended, is neither anticipated nor rendered obvious in view of the prior art references cited against this application. Applicants therefore request the entry of this Amendment, the Examiner's reconsideration and reexamination of the application, and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims, as amended, are patentable over the cited references. The preceding arguments are based only on the arguments in the Official Action, and therefore do not address patentable aspects of the invention that were not addressed by the Examiner in the Official Action. The claims may include other elements that are not shown, taught, or suggested by the cited art. Accordingly, the preceding argument in favor of patentability is advanced without prejudice to other bases of patentability. Furthermore, the Final Office Action contains a number of statements reflecting characterizations of the related art and the claims. Regardless of whether any such statement is identified herein,

Applicants decline to automatically subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Final Office Action.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this amendment and charge any additional required fees to our Deposit Account No. 13-2725.

Respectfully submitted,

By: 

D. Kent Stier
Reg. No. 50,640

Dated: January 13, 2006

Merchant & Gould
P.O. Box 2903
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402-9946
Telephone: 404.954.5066

27488

PATENT TRADEMARK OFFICE

DKS:mdb